

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all previous versions and listings of claims in the Application:

1. (Currently Amended) An Internet implemented method for providing information about a plurality of users to a plurality of requestors, the method comprising:

storing information about the plurality of users in a database located on a cookie management system and associating information about the plurality of users with a plurality of keys;

receiving a request at the cookie management system for information about a particular user of the plurality of users from a requestor over the Internet;

receiving a key associated with the request at the cookie management system from the requestor over the Internet, wherein the key associated with the request is included in a cookie on a machine of the particular user;

using the key associated with the request to retrieve information about the particular user from the database; and

forwarding information about the particular user to the requestor over the Internet;

wherein the requestor determines whether the cookie exists on the machine of the particular user, and wherein in response to determining that the cookie does exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor directly obtains information about the particular user from the cookie management system, and in response to determining that the cookie does not exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor ~~indirectly~~:

indirectly obtains information about the particular user;

generates and stores the cookie including the key on the machine of the particular user; and

provides the key and the information about the particular user to the cookie management system.

2. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises associating a different key for information about each user.

3. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises storing multiple sets of information for at least some of the users with each set of information being associated with a different key.

4. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising checking that the requestor is authorized to obtain the information about the particular user.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein forwarding comprises sending the information in XML format.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising receiving new information about the user from the requestor and updating the database with the new information.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising selecting an available key for a user and supplying the new key to a requestor so that the requestor can store the new key as the cookie on the machine of the particular user.

9. (Currently Amended) An Internet implemented method of obtaining information about a user, the method comprising:

receiving at a requestor website a request over the Internet from a user machine;

retrieving, in a retrieving operation, a cookie including a key from the user machine, wherein the retrieving operation includes determining by the requestor website whether the cookie exists on the user machine, and wherein in response to determining that the cookie does exist on the user machine, the requestor website directly obtains information about the user from a cookie management system;

in response to the requestor website determining that the cookie does not exist on the user machine, the requestor website ~~indirectly~~:

indirectly obtaining information about a user at the user machine;

generating and storing the cookie including the key on the user machine; and

providing information about the user and the key to ~~a~~the cookie management system;

obtaining the key included in the cookie;

sending a query over the Internet from the requestor website to the cookie management system for data associated with the key; and

receiving a set of data associated with the key, wherein the set of data associated with the key includes information about the user.

10. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein receiving the set of data comprises receiving the set of data in XML format.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising using data about the user in responding to the request over the Internet from the user machine.

13. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein retrieving the cookie includes retrieving a plurality of cookies from the user machine.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising receiving a request from a second user machine, checking for cookies on the second user machine, sending a query for an available key when the second user machine does not contain any cookies, and placing a second cookie with the available key on the second user machine.

15. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising obtaining new information about the user and sending the new information and the key over the Internet.

16. (Currently Amended) An Internet implemented system for storing information about a plurality of users and for providing information about the plurality of users to a plurality of requestors, the system comprising:

a database for storing information about the plurality of users and for associating information about the plurality of users with a plurality of keys;

a cookie management system for receiving a request over the Internet from a requestor for a set of information about a particular user of the plurality of users, the request including a key stored as part of a cookie on a machine of the particular user, wherein the machine of the particular user is a computer connected to the Internet; and

a retrieval unit for receiving the key and for retrieving the information about the particular user associated with the key;

wherein the cookie management system obtains the set of information about the particular user from the retrieval unit and forwards the information about the particular user to the requestor,

wherein the requestor determines whether the cookie exists on the machine of the particular user, and wherein in response to determining that the cookie does exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor directly obtains the set of information about the particular

user from the cookie management system, and in response to determining that the cookie does not exist on the machine of the particular user, the requestor ~~indirectly~~:

indirectly obtains the set of information about the particular user; then the requestor

generates and stores the cookie including the key on the machine of the particular user; and

provides the key and the set of information about the particular user to the cookie management system.

17. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a key assignor for assigning, in the database, available keys to new users.

18. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising an update unit for storing new information about users in the database.

19. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a verifier for verifying that the requestor is authorized to receive the set of information about the particular user.

20. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the cookie management system forwards the set of information about the particular user to the requestor in XML format.

21. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein associating information about the plurality of users with the plurality of keys includes associating information about the plurality of users with the plurality of keys according to one of different categories and different levels of information about the particular user and the method further comprises:

receiving a plurality of user-supplied passwords, each user-supplied password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponding to each key of the plurality of keys; and

using only each user-supplied password corresponding to each key of the plurality of keys to retrieve the information about the particular user from the database, wherein each user-supplied password corresponds to an amount and type of information about the particular user that the particular user wants the requestor to have.

22. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising:

associating information about the user with a plurality of cookies according to one of different categories and different levels of data about the user;

receiving a plurality of user-supplied passwords, wherein each user-password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponds to each cookie of the plurality of cookies; and

receiving information about the user associated with each user-supplied password, wherein each user-supplied password corresponds to an amount and type of information that the user wants the requestor to have.

23. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the database associates the set of information about the plurality of users with the plurality of keys according to one of different categories and different levels of the information about the particular user;

wherein the cookie management system further receives a plurality of user-supplied passwords, wherein each user-supplied password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponds to each key of the plurality of keys; and

wherein the retrieval unit receives only user-supplied passwords which are used by the requestor to retrieve the set of information about the particular user associated with each user-supplied password, and wherein each user-supplied password of the plurality of user-supplied passwords corresponds to an amount and type of the set of information about the particular user that the particular user wants the requestor to have.

24. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the requestor provides information about the particular user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie on the machine of the particular user so that information about the particular user is stored

in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the machine of the particular user.

25. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein providing information about the user to the cookie management system comprises providing information about the user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie to the user machine so that information about the user is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the user machine.

26. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the requestor provides information about the particular user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie to the machine of the particular user so that information about the particular user is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the machine of the particular user.